DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 363 950 EA 025 432

AUTHOR Doyle, Richard; And Others
TITLE Praises & Nudges: A Case of District-Wide Change.
PUB DATE Apr 93
NOTE 35p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Atlanta, GA, April 12-16, 1993).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Collegiality; Decision Making; Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; Organizational Change; *Organizational Communication; *Participative Decision Making; *Program Implementation; *School Based Management; School Districts
IDENTIFIERS *Marshalltown Community School District IA

ABSTRACT

This paper describes the processes and outcomes experienced by the Marshalltown Community School District (Iowa) as it implemented a shared decision-making, school-improvement program. A district Shared Decision Making (SDM) Team and School Improvement Program (SIP) teams were trained to facilitate greater staff participation in the school-improvement process. Data were obtained through staff surveys conducted in 1991 and 1992 and a Rapporteur Report. Through experience, the district learned the following lessons: (1) The purpose must be clearly articulated and widely known and owned; (2) the purpose must be based on a consciously developed philosophy rooted in shared theory; (3) the need for change must be broadly understood and accepted; and (4) the leaders of stakeholder groups must demonstrate the envisioned change. In addition, implementation of the school-improvement program entailed: (5) significant new investment and commitment to training; (6) voluntary and active participation; (7) changed power sources and relationships; (8) conscious development of partner-customer-supplier relationships; (9) a balance of individual affirmation with collaboration; (10) a focus on process over end results; (11) eradication of communication barriers; (12) data-based assessment; and (13) total, dynamic, and generative participation. (LMI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 363 950

Praises & Nudges: A Case of District-Wide Change

Richard Doyle

Phil Tetzloff

Tom Renze

Marshalltown School District
Marshalltown, Iowa

Paper to be presented as part of the symposium, "District-Wide Change: Frameworks, Evidence of Progress, Visions, Research Questions, and Collaboration," at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Atlanta, GA, April 1993.

EA 025 432

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

R. Doyle

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Marshalltown Community School District
Marshalltown, Iowa

A community nestled in the heartland of the nation, Marshalltown is characterized by its eclectic composition: rural and urban living; an economy based on a balance of agriculture, commerce, and industry; residents employed in business, professional and laboring pursuits. The community takes pride in preserving a high quality of life for all of its inhabitants.

A progressive district, the Marshalltown Community School District serves approximately 4800 students in eleven attendance centers. Although approximately fifty-seven percent of Marshalltown's graduates seek additional education, declining enrollments posed a serious challenge for the entire community. With the loss of over 2,000 students during the last two decades, the community is reassessing how to design teaching and learning opportunities that encourage all students to achieve high school certification. The district mission statement is to nurture students to become intellectually and personally empowered for citizenship in a changing world.

Even though a number of positive changes had already been initiated in the Marshalltown schools, participation in the NEA's Learning Laboratory Initiative is providing the impetus and the framework for fundamental change in the areas of identifying and implementing strategies to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of instruction through the initiation and use of shared decision making/school improvement models in each school building. The project vision statement is to improve teaching and learning through systematic school restructuring at all levels wherein all staff are encouraged and trained to assume more active roles in a shared decision making/school improvement process.

Based on the conviction that increased student achievement and improved curriculum and instructional practices result when everyone involved with the learner has an opportunity to participate in the identification and solutions of problems in the school environment, the Marshalltown shared decision making/school improvement model reflects the following principles:

School improvement is best accomplished building by building when supported by district commitment and resources;

School improvement will be supported when consensus through collaboration is the preferred process for making decisions;

School improvement is effective and long lasting when carried out by those who feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for the identification and solution of problems;

School improvement can best be sustained when all components of the school district are working together;

School improvement will result in effective teaching and learning;

School improvement will best be accomplished by incorporating proven research into classroom practices.

A significant component of this shared decision making/school improvement model is the District Shared Decision Making (SDM) Team comprised of a "vertical slice" of the school community, including teachers, administrators, a school board member, parents, local business and community people, and Association representatives. Through a collaborative effort between Iowa Leadership in Educational Administration Development at Iowa State University (I-LEAD), the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and the Institute for Development of Educational Activities (/I/D/E/A/), a special training program was developed to provide the team with the skills and knowledge necessary to effect and support change (I-LEAD, AASA, /I/D/E/A/, 1989). Building School Improvement Program (SIP) Teams have similarly been formed and trained (/I/D/E/A/, 1990 and 1991) and will develop their own process for making decisions, using consensus building and problem solving strategies, brainstorming, team building and goal setting techniques to improve teaching and learning. Design teams are active in all buildings working toward achievement of identified school improvement goals.

1. Purpose must be clearly articulated and widely "known and owned".

The over-riding philosophy of the district is that the improvement of teaching and learning is the most significant goal of the school. In development of goals for the project, it was felt that the best approach to achieving significant improvement is to harness the creative talents, energies, and skills of district stakeholders by direct participation in decisions that affect them. Stakeholders believed that improvement should be initiated and supported not only from the top down, but if it was to be successful, also must be initiated and grown from the bottom up. Consequently, the major focus of the shared decision-making project was intended to be the improvement of student achievement and improvement of the instructional delivery system. The intent behind the project was to attain these twin goals by designing a shared decision-making model that would provide for direct participation in decision making by those people nearest the level where the decision is to be implemented.

Shared decision-making is accomplished when everyone involved with the learner has an opportunity to participate in the identification and solutions of problems in the school environment. In a shared decision-making environment the participants are encouraged to communicate across the district. Teachers, administrators, classified personnel, students, and parents share concerns and together arrive at decisions that solve problems.

The two major goals of the Marshalltown Shared Decision Making Project are articulated in the "Learning Lab Decision Making Booklet" developed by the Shared Decision Making Team (Learning Lab Initiative - Shared Decision Making, 1990). They are: (1) To improve the curriculum and instructional practices of teachers in the Marshalltown Community School District by promoting a flexible shared decision-making and decentralized management model with teachers, administrators, classified personnel, students, and parents; (2) To promote increased student achievement (K-12) in the Marshalltown

Community School District by implementing a flexible shared decision-making and decentralized management model at the school building level. Specific purposes of the project are: (1) To develop and provide a flexible shared decision-making model which accommodates the differences in each building; (2) To provide an effective means to develop and achieve building goals and objectives within the framework of the district goals and objectives; (3) To provide collegial, cooperative, and professional relationships among teachers, administrators, classified personnel, students, and parents; (4) To focus the shared decision-making model on the improvement of teaching and learning. The booklet has been distributed to all staff members and frequently updated by the decision-making team.

Communicating the purposes of the district's change effort has been more difficult that anticipated. Data from staff surveys indicate that the district has been only partially successful in communicating the purposes of SDM (Marshalltown SDM/SIP Survey, 1991). Fifty-seven (57%) of the teachers feel the purposes have been clearly communicated to them and 83% of the administrators feel the same. No progress has been made with the teachers in this regard during the last year, since the 1992 survey data was virtually identical (Marshalltown SDM/SIP Survey, 1992). The district is still ineffective at communicating the purposes of SDM to classified staff. Just 30% feel the purposes have been communicated; however, that represents a 7% increase over the previous year.

We are clearly seeing that staff does want to be involved in decisions that affect them. Eighty-four (84%) of teachers, 100% of administrators, and 66% of classified staff have indicated on the staff survey that they do not want to just live with decisions made by others. Likewise, teachers (61%) and administrators (65%) don't feel overwhelmed with the decisions they are asked to make at their school. However, just a few teachers (38%) and classified (18%) believe they have sufficient influence over

school-level decisions that affect their jobs. Most administrators (83%), on the other hand, do feel a sufficient sense of influence over school-level decisions affecting their jobs.

A major thrust at the building levels during the present school year has been the formation and development of design teams at the building level. These design teams provide a method to extend participation in the planning and implementation processes to other stakeholders who have not yet been involved. It remains to be seen whether survey data will indicate that the purposes of the project are being more clearly understood by the masses. The Rapporteur Report noted that a common language that reflects clear purpose and function was lacking and needed (National Center for Innovation, 1991). Following much discussion about the purpose of the project and its relationship to school improvement, the name of the project was changed from *Shared Decision Making Project* to *Shared Decision Making for School Improvement.* Likewise, the name *District Vertical Team* was changed to *District Shared Decision Making Team* to better reflect the purpose of the team and to better reflect parallelism with the SIF decision-making structure at the building levels.

2. Purpose must be based upon a consciously developed philosophy rooted in shared theory.

As cited above the first purpose of the SDM project was to develop and provide a flexible shared decision making model in each building. Multiple stakeholder involvement was initiated in the early work of forming the district steering committee, later to be identified as the SDM Team. The AASA-/I/D/E/A/ model, which was used for training the district team recommended multiple stakeholder involvement/ training. That training along with the steering committee's desire to have a representative from each of the buildings involved led to the formation of the district SDM team. It is comprised of teachers, administrators, a school board member, parents, business and community people and association

representatives both from the local and state level. Diverse membership was intended to reflect the belief that a variety of perspectives lead to better decisions.

It was obvious these multiple perspectives could make the change process more difficult in some ways, but it was also understood that they could make it far richer and more meaningful if each stakeholder experienced ownership and the opportunity to have their perspective included. Equally important was the opportunity for real, meaningful involvement and participation in decision making during the time the district's philosophy regarding shared decision making and school improvement was being established. It was felt stakeholders must affect what is happening if they are to own the process, theory or philosophy.

In the first rapporteur report of May, 1991 the district was commended for its openness to genuine multiple stakeholder involvement and its attention to developing structures and processes for meaningful participation. It is believed this multiple stakeholder involvement, the collaborative development of project purposes, beliefs, goals and rationale, communicated to all parties of the school community in writing, helped determine our shared philosophy of decision making and school improvement.

The "Learning Lab Decision Making Booklet" which has been used throughout the district includes the purposes, fundamental beliefs, goals and rationale dealing with the shared decision making/school improvement process in Marshalltown. The booklet has been a communication tool that has allowed all participants involved in school improvement to keep the purpose of the change process and the vision of what our schools can be in mind as they work together to improve teaching and learning in the schools.

Staff surveys show teachers and administrators have a strong "buy in" and belief in the shared decision making process. The 1991 survey data indicates 60% of the teachers agree that participating in

the shared decision making process is a worthwhile use of time. Sixty-two (62%) of administrators agree the process is a worthwhile use of their time.

It can be seen from the 1992 survey data that the majority of professional staff still believe that SDM is worth their time. The percentage of administrators in this category increased from 62% in the 1991 survey to 87% in the 1992 survey. Also in the 1992 survey data it can be seen there is a growing appreciation by both teachers and administrators of the value of parent's perspectives and a strong indication from teachers, administrators and classified staff that they want to be involved in decisions that affect them as opposed to having to live with decisions made by others. This is a positive indication that the SDM philosophy is widely shared and supported.

3. Need for change must be broadly understood and accepted.

The concept of collaborative change was not new to the district when the Learning Lab Shared Decision Making Project began. The district had already successfully introduced a number of innovations through close cooperation between the administration, the teacher association, and the Board of Education. Through joint efforts, the staff evaluation processes had been redesigned and implemented. The association and district also developed a comprehensive staff development program that allowed teachers and building administrators to design individual and site-specific professional improvement projects, using a research process. A career ladder for teachers had been developed and put into place. Peer counseling and teacher mentoring programs were in operation. The district had designed and implemented a long-ranged training plan for staff development in which every certificated member participated in intensive teacher effectiveness training during released time during the school day. Stakeholders had been actively involved in the selection of a new superintendent of schools. Change, then, was not new to the district.

Because of the general support and successes of these past changes, it was felt that teachers, administrators, and the community were ready for a further step toward school improvement. One of the praises noted by the Rapporteur team was a "strong pride in the community and the schools (from school people and community people)."

From the beginning of the SDM project an attempt was made to include representative members of stakeholders groups in the planning and direction. The SDM Team originally included teachers, administrators, members of the Iowa State Education Association, and Board members. Soon after the initial training session a parent representative and a community representative were added. The May, 1991, Rapporteur report noted the involvement of stakeholder groups. "We are impressed by your multiple stakeholder involvement and support multiple stakeholder involvement and support...Several aspects of stakeholder involvement are impressive at Marshalltown: there is a significant amount, it is broad-based, and it is authentic." The rationale for a broad base of involvement was to create a sense of ownership, acceptance and support for SDM through commitment by participation. Each of the stakeholders was charged with communicating the purpose and happenings of the project to their respective groups.

Data indicating that the change process is clearly understood and accepted indicates general, but not complete support for the need for change. Data from the spring, 1991 interviews of 98 employees indicated that 81 agreed and 17 disagreed with the statement that "Changing from the way decisions are actually made, at the present time, to a shared decision-making model is a desirable growth priority and need for the SDM project." After the first year in the project there was still skepticism that "the higher-ups will still make the final decisions". Concern about the pace of change surfaced from the staff surveys. In 1991 35% of the teachers and 56% of the administrators indicated that there is too much change too

fast in the district. In 1992 those percentages rose to 40% for teachers and fell to 52% for administrators. Despite the concern about change, 68% of teachers and 91% of administrators in 1992 agreed with the focus on shared decision making, and 51% of the teachers and 74% of administrators believed that enough momentum exists to support SDM efforts that last. We have concluded from this data that while the concept of SDM is generally accepted and supported in the staff and in the community, there is a great concern regarding the number of changes occurring in the district and the pace with which they are happening. This conclusion is validated from the Rapporteur Report, discussions and feedback through the SDM Team about finding time to implement SDM, and other programs in the district. Frustrations about time factors appear to be a major cause of anxiety about change. To address this area, the SDM Team has established a Time Study Design Team, whose task is to investigate and facilitate methods of securing greater amounts of time for building staffs to work on school improvement issues within the school day.

4. The "top" must demonstrate the envisioned change.

Leaders of the stakeholder groups have dreamed of a collaborative school improvement process since the SDM Team formed. The district's "Learning Lab Decision Making Booklet" lists the following partners in the project: Marshalltown Board of Education, Marshalltown Education Association/ISEA/ NEA, Superintendent, Administration, and Parents. The SDM Team has representatives from each organization from the early days of the project. A fundamental belief statement from the booklet, "School improvement can best be sustained when all components of the school district are working together" underscores how the "tops" felt about the importance of this principle.

The leaders of the stakeholder groups developed a trust level early in the project that made working together on the SDM Team a priority. This change in working relationships was made easier to accept

and understand through the /I/D/E/A/ leadership and team building activities the SDM Team completed during the first months of the project.

A decision was made by the co-facilitators that all presentations to other district groups, professional groups, and public conferences would be the responsibility of the stakeholders. This was an opportunity to model to our stakeholders, and others interested in school improvement the dream of collaboration by many to improve teaching and learning.

The SDM Team participated in the ISEA sponsored network of school restructuring. This network was designed to offer support and training to collaborative teams from public school districts in Iowa. Patrick Dolan was the featured trainer and delivered a series of lectures and activities to identify a framework for the "tops" of important stakeholder groups to structure an on-going collaborative change strategy (Dolan, 1989). This training also built on the AASA-/I/D/E/A/ concept of systemic change for public schools. Our SDM Team learned Dolan's theory and used it to identify the "boundaries" within our district and designed a process to support change that would occur at a school. This is a never ending process and needs constant attention by the leadership of the stakeholders.

The Rapporteur report praised the SDM Team for its commitment to share its learnings and experiences in a variety of formats and locations. They cite our use of /I/D/E/A/ information to guide process, training, and stakeholder involvement in school improvement. The report also mentioned the many positive emotional, psychological, and personal elements of the school climate in the district that contribute to a readiness to change the way business is done.

During the second year of the project the district SDM Team debated the issue of what its relationship to schools should be. The decision was to function as a resource and support system for the building teams. This was a conscious decision by the team to avoid becoming another level of decision

making bureaucracy within the district. The leaders of the stakeholder groups supported this decision. The SDM Team expected the building teams to also model this structure and function.

During year one of the project the SDM Team had developed faith in the importance of building trust as a requisite for stakeholders in the change process. A second year activity was the training of three facilitators from each school in the /I/D/E/A/-SIP leadership and visioning process. Each school was asked to bring a teacher, parent and principal to the training session. The following year these facilitators and other interested stakeholders received additional SIP training in setting goal priorities and establishing design teams to meet the selected goals. Later, this group had training from Peter Holly in using action research to design, implement, and assess actions to meet the goals.

A lesson the "top" has learned is that our dream of collaborative change is a process that continues. It is not a one time or a one year project that can be given to others for completion. Collaborative work in our district means daily sharing and trust and that we all achieve the same outcomes from our efforts.

5. Significant new investment and commitment must be made in educating/training prospective participants in the new theory and philosophy and relevant skills

The district leadership realized that preparing for system wide change and initiating improvements would take more resources, specifically time and money. The district staff development budget was increased, and additional funds were secured from the Iowa State Education Association (ISEA), NEA and a state labor-management council to help support new kinds of training. It was later decided training/in-service help would come from ISU, AASA, /I/D/E/A/ and the local Area Education Agency as well as from the NEA and ISEA. Although more time has been made available for training through the use of substitutes, extended contracts, etc., it still is an investment the district must find ways to increase.

The Rapporteur team report of 1991 recognized the Marshalltown District's overall commitment to and shared valuing of training. Pointing out training as one of the most critical and most often overlooked aspects of systemic change, the rapporteurs were aware people were needing new and different skills and that the district was responding with ongoing training that was necessary to acquire those skills. In the follow-up Rapporteur report of 1992 (National Center for Innovation, 1992) it was again recognized the district had continued sustained attention to training by expanding it more to the building level (/I/D/E/A/-SIP training) and that workshops with Pat Dolan and Peter Holly (Holly, 1989) contributed significantly to skills and understandings.

/I/D/E/A/ training provided to the district SDM team in 1990 and the building SIP teams in 1991 trained all participants with facilitative leadership behaviors. Consensus decision making, visioning and goal setting were also skills addressed in preparing both district and building teams for school improvement. This in-service training was provided to not only administrators and teachers but also to at least one parent who was responsible along with a teacher and principal for facilitating the building's school improvement team.

An attempt was made to integrate the district's ongoing in-service and focus it to support building school improvement teams. Courses and seminars offered through the district's career ladder began to reflect the wishes of teachers for in-service in areas such as cooperative teaching, full integration of special education students, and using research and data driven decision making. Simultaneously, in-service by Peter Holly and Pat Dolan was being provided to all district and building school improvement teams. Peter Holly emphasized the use of Action Research and Pat Dolan worked with the district on breaking down communication barriers, moving toward a more collaborative negotiations process and breaking the mold of the hierarchical decision making model. These additional in-service resources were provided

when the majority of the teams were asking for and needing support and additional skills. A review of Reflections (a technique used at the end of each district SDM meeting to evaluate the meeting and suggest topics for the next meeting) provides examples of the value of this in-service (Reflections, 1989-1993). Peter Holly workshops were described as "well received by multiple stakeholders and design team members." "Holly and /I/D/E/A/ integrated and brought it all together for people." "The workshops increased commitment and provided tools."

6. Participation in the new processes and approaches must be voluntary and active.

District SDM Team discussions during the first year included anxious thoughts and feelings that maybe no building staff would want any part of shared decision making. The writers of the Learning Laboratory proposal were guided by the long history of community support and administration and teacher cooperation to improve teaching and learning in the district. An important decision was made by the SDM Team to develop a model of shared decision making for building teams to follow - if they chose to participate in the project. In other words participation in the project would not be mandated.

Participation in the project was a decision administrators and staff of each building would make. Participation on building planning and design teams was left to individuals and their personal and professional choices. The SDM Team recommended that building teams use the consensus building model as the way to make shared decisions. Also, that "pyramiding" (see definition of pyramiding in Principle 11) be used continuously by building teams to avoid becoming another committee in the bureaucracy. This avoided the danger of making decisions without the active participation of the stakeholders. This action was noted as a general praise in the Rapporteur Report. The report also referred to a strong climate for change and participant's sense of freedom and openness that enabled their constructive participation.

SDM Team members debated the types of decisions they would make. The consensus was to be a support and resource to building teams and not a traditional committee granting approval or permission or directing a specific school improvement action. Board, central office, building, department, and teacher association structure already existed for those types of decisions.

The new district SDM structure would also reinforce the spirit of voluntary participation by stakeholders. By making a choice not to participate in shared decision making in a building, stakeholders were not left out of the formal or traditional decision making structure of the school system. The expectation of the district SDM Team and building SIP Team was that those who chose not to participate in the SDM process would not be blockers of changes sought by their building team.

The district SDM Team is involved in making decisions about training needs of building teams. They conduct an annual survey to determine building and district progress toward the four purposes of the project. They have taken steps to insure that building data from the survey goes back to that building only. This reinforces collaboration rather than competition between stakeholders. The SDM Team has also developed a training manual for building teams to use. The district team encourages building teams to model group process and trust building activities to strengthen collaboration among their stakeholders. Additionally, the SDM Team sponsored training for building level teams in action research as a tool to help their teams learn to use data to improve the decisions they make.

The SDM Team developed a waiver process to assist building teams obtain relief from an existing policy or contract rule that was a barrier to implementing a change (Doyle & Tetzloff, 1992). This process guides teams to and through the formal structures that govern how the district has operated in specific situations. The team does not grant approval of the waiver but supports the building team(s) as they seek permission from the appropriate governance body(ies) to operate in a new way.

Survey data indicate about 62% agreement by teachers and 87% by administrators that SDM is worth their time. Sixty-two (62%) of the teachers and 91% of the administrators agree they make sure their views are heard in SDM discussions. Fifty-seven (57%) of the teachers and 87% of the administrators agree SDM is empowering because they are part of the decisions. The district's "Learning Lab Decision Making Booklet" states "School improvement is effective and long lasting when carried out by those who feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for the identification and solutions of problems." Our experience has shown that stakeholders were ready and willing to participate in sharing decision making responsibility when given the opportunity to make that choice.

7. Power sources and relationships must be visibly altered.

Changes in the trust level have visibly altered relationship among stakeholders. The Learning Laboratory Initiative project was written by an administrator and association officer. From the initial thoughts about shared decision making in the district, the project has been a collaborative effort supported by many groups in the system. The SDM Team has had co-facilitators, the writers of the project, since the first meeting. The district's manual states, "A school improvement project developed through the cooperative efforts of the Marshalltown Board of Education, Marshalltown Education Association/ISEA/ NEA, Superintendent, Administration, and Parents." Perhaps the most noticeable change in traditional relationships was the full inclusion of an ISEA program specialist and the UNISERV Director on the SDM Team. Traditional roles of members have been set aside at the SDM meetings. Each functions as an equal participant in a setting where the power of an idea is more valued than the power of a position.

The Marshalltown project has attempted to approach school improvement through redesigning the relationships that influence the decision making process. Each of the buildings has in place a SIP team, based upon the /I/D/E/A/ model. Those teams consist of teachers, classified staff, building principals,

central office persons, school board members, parents, community members, and at the high school, students. Planning teams have been provided with the latitude and authority to make decisions and develop programs that it believes are in the best interests of the school's students. A waiver process was developed by the SDM team and approved by the Board of Education whereby an individual building can seek a waiver from district or state rules and policies that might conflict with building plans. To date, just one waiver has been requested, and it was granted to a middle school to alter its schedule from a seven period to an eight period day.

Data indicates that there has been some anxiety about changing roles that accompany the SDM model. A December, 1990, survey of the ten building principals indicated that all believed that SDM would work in their buildings, all were enthusiastic about SDM. Eight principals disagreed with a statement that SDM diminishes the principal's authority, and eight of the ten indicated that the way they spend their time had changed because of SDM. However, all ten also indicated that SDM would reduce their ability to run their buildings.

The Rapporteur Report also noted anxieties about changing roles, in particular to the changing role of principals and of central office staff. "We heard very different conceptions of the principal's role among the principals themselves, as well as from faculty members. Questions about the new role of the central office came primarily from faculty members who are still unclear about what is REALLY different. While new roles are not easily defined, some attention here seems important."

Staff survey data indicates that 57% of the teachers and 87% of the administrators feel empowered by SDM because they are part of the decision. A growing percentage of staff, however (37.2% in 1992 vs. 24% in 1991) do not feel empowered. Likewise, 59% of the teachers in the latest survey still feel they do not have sufficient influence over school-level decisions that affect their jobs, and 81% feel they do

not have sufficient influence over decisions about how the budget at their school is allocated. One area where the majority of teachers (61%) and administrators (61%) do agree is that their school is able to make decisions based upon the populations they serve.

Observations from the interview data in 1991 indicated that after the first year of SDM in the buildings, it was the belief of staff that a flexible SDM model was being practiced to a moderate degree. There was evidence of a lot of sharing, but some people felt they were not participating fully in the process. Those involved with SDM believed it was working, while those not involved did not share that belief.

District practices in the past two years have encouraged building level teams to participate directly in the staffing of their buildings by such measures as selecting teachers and educational aides for their school, and direct participation in the principal selection process. For example, in the selection of a new high school principal the high school SIP team designed the interview procedures for selection of the high school principal, and the high school staff selected representatives to participate on the interview team along with central office personnel, school board representatives, and community members. A similar selection procedure was used to hire a new elementary principal. This concerted effort to share in the decision-making processes was noted in the Rapporteur Follow-Up Report: "There is an intentional effort to avoid adding new levels of hierarchy (as cautioned in the Rapporteur Report) and to maintain the locus of decision making at the school level. Additional evidence of concern for hierarchy rests in the district's goals of reducing administration in proportion to reduction of teachers."

Other areas of district relationships are affected by the SDM philosophy, as well. A design team comprised of teachers, parents, community members, administrators, school board members and community members recommends the school calendar to the Board of Education. A similar team serves

to examine financial problems and recommend alternatives for reducing the district budget. Through these and other measures the sources of decision-making power are being expanded to include greater numbers of stakeholders in decisions that affect them.

8. Partner-customer-supplier relationships must be consciously developed.

One of the fundamental beliefs is that school improvement is best accomplished building by building. It will be most effective and long-lasting when carried out by those who feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for the identification and solution of problems. This partner-customer-supplier relationship has grown and changed with training and experience. Early in the project the SDM team debated its role in the district's decision-making structure and in relationship to the building SIP teams. The responsibilities of the SDM team focused upon developing a model for decision-making, facilitating the formation and development of building SDM teams, disseminating literature and research about school improvement and shared decision making to the buildings, imparting the vision of improved teaching/learning and curriculum through shared decision making, and monitoring, evaluating, and reporting the progress of the shared decision-making process. The SDM team became a "keeper of the vision" for shared decision making.

Data from the 1991 survey indicated that, in addition to the certified staff who were not involved in the shared decision making process, most classified staff were not knowledgeable about the SDM project or its purpose. A great per cent of the classified staff indicated on the survey that they did not know the purposes of SDM, were not involved, and did not see it as applying to them. Efforts at involving parents seem to be paying off, according to staff survey data. Most teachers (88%) and administrators (96%) believe that direct involvement from people with a variety of roles strengthens the

SDM process. Likewise, most teachers (61%) and administrators (83%) believe that parents add a valuable perspective to school improvement discussions.

As a result, three goals were established by the SDM Team for the 1991-92 school year: (1) to facilitate a district-wide presentation to all stakeholders regarding the SDM project; (2) to add representation from the classified staff to the SDM Team; (3) to make every effort to include people who would reflect a diverse representation of the school culture and encourage school teams to do likewise. That same theme was expanded to the district level through adoption by the Board of Education as a major goal the expansion of the SDM Project through the implementation of building goals as defined by building School Improvement Program Teams. Within that goal are three sub goals: (a) to support buildings as they initiate action on identified goals; (b) to continue to foster good communication with the Board regarding purposes and desired outcomes of the Shared Decision-Making project; (c) to increase the focus on "shared decision making for school improvement."

Additions to the SDM Team include a representative from the classified staff, a representative from the Area Education Agency (intermediate support agency), as well as concerted efforts to ensure that each building appoints an active member to represent it a each District SDM meeting.

Every building has formed a School Improvement Planning (SIP) team whose membership consists of parents, teachers, classified staff, community members, the principal, central office personnel, a school board member and at the high school, a student. Each SIP team now has formed two or more design teams, whose membership also consists of additional parents, teachers, and community members. Seven of the ten buildings have identified increased parent participation and/or communication as a major goals. One recent example of an activity designed to meet the goal of parent involvement was evidenced at an elementary school. At a celebration to announce its school improvement goals, a ceremony was held in

which students, parents, staff, and community were invited to circle the school by joining hands and enlist as school "stakeholders". One of the parents made a large sign bearing the school's goals and took an aerial photograph of the event.

Through the efforts of SIP teams and design teams at other buildings, such projects as school-business partnerships, extended school day programs, mentoring programs, neighborhood school projects, and other exciting developments are forming and taking place. The Rapporteur Follow-Up Report encouraged the district to continue to push involvement and communication to the less involved. "Involvement has increased considerably at the building level, and there are multiple stakeholders on each SIP team. Several people reported this as one of the year's big successes. Classified staff now get release time for meetings. The special subject teachers and resource specialists reportedly feel more involved.

Acting in a support role to the building SIP teams, the SDM Team has provided training for facilitators through /I/D/E/A/ in the areas of team-building, trust-building, consensus-making, and goal-setting. Follow-up training was also provided on the development of design teams. Peter Holly was brought to the district to improve skills of SIP facilitators, administrators, association leadership, and some SIP teacher and parent members in the areas of action research and of writing action plans.

The impact of the shared decision-making efforts, we believe, are just beginning to be felt, and thus far we do not have much data to measure actual effects upon student achievement. Our sense is that more attention and focus needs to be given to studying the impact of the SDM efforts upon student achievement. However, we do know from the survey data that 64% of the teachers believe that students are actively involved in decision making in their classrooms. Sixty-one (61%) of both teachers and administrators believe that their schools are able to make decisions based upon the particular needs of the

populations they serve. In addition, 70% of the teachers indicated that they use action research to improve teaching and learning in their classrooms.

9. Individual affirmation must be balanced with collaboration.

Just as there must be a balance between the creative tension caused by process and substance as individuals work in groups, there must be a balance between the creative tension caused by collaborating with others while remaining independent as a stakeholder. The district encourages using consensus to make decisions when it is applicable. This process works well when the stakeholders trust other members of the group to be responsive to individual perspectives and judgments. The district's "Learning Lab Decision Making Booklet" lists as one of the SDM purposes "to provide collegial, cooperative, and professional relationships among teachers, administrators, classified personnel, students, and parents." The district SDM Team has accepted this principle as an important step in the process of sharing decision making responsibility among stakeholders.

A strong indicator of acceptance of individual affirmation by 84% of the teachers and all of the administrators was disagreement with the survey statement "I'll live with the decision of others." And 69% of the teachers and administrators agreed "People are committed to working together at my school."

All team facilitators were trained to appreciate diversity among stakeholders, and that disagreements are to be expected in group work. A tension that exists is how to disagree with another or others without being disagreeable. It is important to trust other stakeholders and believe in the process and goal of improving teaching and learning in our schools. It is also important to trust that those same stakeholders will hold valid perceptions and perspectives about the same data, ideas, and actions that may be different from our own. A challenge to facilitators is the acceptance and use of these varied ideas in keeping the change efforts moving toward identified goals.

As mentioned earlier the district SDM Team, leaders of stakeholder groups, and building team facilitators have accepted the essential first step of collaboration as trust in the importance of improving teaching and learning in our schools. Only through a process that recognizes the dignity of each stakeholder's choice to participate in the process of school improvement will a collaborative effort be successful to change our schools. Our training in group processing skills, the action research process, and the modeling done by the district SDM Team in our opinion supports the balance between individual affirmation and collaboration.

Budget restrictions, individual values, professional judgments, social pressures, and business expectations are some of the forces that continue to influence individual stakeholder's confidence to trust the shared decision making process. Constant attention to process and substance by team facilitators are necessary to assure each person maintains dignity and a role in the learning community. Communication among all the stakeholders also serves to maintain the trust that all of us have the common goal of improving teaching and learning in our schools and that change is desired.

10. Process, at all levels, must be emphasized over end results.

Team building, developing trust among all stakeholders, and group process skills were chosen by the co-facilitators as the most important skills to be learned by the members of the SDM Team. After one organizing meeting and much discussion the district SDM Team was trundled off to the AASA-/I/D/E/A/ leadership training session where these skills were developed. Being able to use these skills in each of our monthly meetings got us off on the right track toward understanding the complexity of making systemic changes in our schools. Many observers of the SDM Team's meetings during the first year questioned the attention to process activities that was structured into each session. A fundamental belief

mentioned earlier states "School improvement can best be sustained when all components of the school district are working together" underscored our commitment to consistent use of this principle.

The information the SDM Team members received from the /I/D/E/A/ training programs, the ISEA Dolan Network, AASA, and Peter Holly validated our belief in the value of everyone working together. From the process used at all SDM Team meetings the stakeholders learned to value each other's common beliefs and different perceptions of specific issues. We learned to analyze and interpret data, reach consensus about specific meanings of proposed actions, and to share the commitment to make a specific change. We built step by step a "learning community", an idea gained from Peter Senge. As district SDM Team members became active on building teams they continued to model the process skills that they had learned earlier. We strongly believe it is this attention to process that enables buildings to create their own "learning community".

It should be remembered from earlier discussion the SDM Team designed training for all building teams that emphasized trust, group process skills, and using data to make decisions. The attention to process used by teams at buildings is no accident; it was taught and modeled by the district Team. Another point to remember is the attention paid to communication among all the stakeholders. This process is designed to make sure no one is left out of the decision making process, that the system is open to anyone who chooses to participate.

The Rapporteur Report contains a statement of extremely high praise for our sustained attention to process. They recognized the creative tension that exists between process and substance. The district SDM Team felt attention to substance would come to building teams as they completed the visioning process and selected goals to move them toward making the vision a reality. Design teams in each building have now made that transition and are working on specific substantive goals.

Monthly reports by building representatives on the district SDM Team indicates that creative tension to use process skills to make school-based changes in teaching, learning, and curriculum exists in building teams. A training notebook developed by the SDM Team gives building teams additional resources to train new stakeholders in trust building, group process and other team building skills. Observers of current district SDM Team meetings would notice the same process skills and activities are being used to maintain trust and collaboration among their members. For us, process has been emphasized over short term results.

11. Communication barriers must be eradicated

A great deal of time and effort has been spent enhancing communications about the change process because of the importance of communication to the success of the district's efforts. However, even though the district continues to work hard on this, it still remains an area of concern. It is hoped communication will be improved as more and more people are involved in the school improvement process through such activities as action research, design teams, and serving on SIP teams.

Communication was a concern recognized early by the Rapporteur team. The report in May, 1991 stated that "communication to the less involved or uninvolved teacher is not occurring. Pyramiding is not working and may conflict with other communication procedures." As a result, the district SDM Team added a classified member to its ranks, and established a design team to consider improved communications. In addition buildings identified parent involvement as one of their building-level goals. This fall each of the SIP teams made a presentation of its work and discussed its building goals with the Board of Education. All of these efforts have served to increase the flow of information to interested individuals and groups.

It has been mentioned earlier in this paper that the district SDM Team is a "vertical slice" of the school community, ie. members represent a variety of stakeholder groups in the school and community. Multiple stakeholder involvement is in itself an aid to better communication since information can be carried back and forth between a variety of groups. The district team does not see itself as another hierarchial decision making group, in fact, it works hard not to impose any decisions on building teams and instead serves in a more nurturing and supportive role to facilitate change throughout the district. One responsibility the district team has assumed is to increase and support communication dealing with shared decision making and school improvement. A number of communication strategies have been initiated, such as:

- Every building has a representative on the district Shared Decision Making team who reports monthly on their building activities.
- All central office cabinet members and school district board members serve on building SIP teams.
- Learning Lab information regarding SDM/School Improvement goes out under that letterhead/logo and is printed on teal colored paper.
- Each building has a teal colored chart placed in teacher workrooms displaying information about the Learning Lab project. Information is updated periodically.
- Minutes from each district SDM team meeting are provided to all building SIP teams and also circulated to any other interested faculty members.
- A design team formed by the district team has been given the responsibility of "worrying" about communication and as a result has suggested a number of ways to improve.
- Two ISEA staff people have been members of the district SDM Team from its beginning. Consequently, communication between the local district, the district association and the ISEA has improved.
- Networking between Learning Lab districts (Obermeyer, PSInet computer system) and the NEA's use of meetings and requests for documentation have improved and increased the communication level with the NEA.

- Key association members are involved in communications in a timely manner. Many individual association members serve on building SIP teams and also the district SDM team, therefore they are involved when ideas which might impact the association are discussed.

- The "Learning Lab Decision Making Booklet" has been widely circulated throughout the district and includes the district's beliefs and goals relating to shared decision making and school improvement.

One communication technique which has been especially helpful to the district is the use of pyramid groups. These communication groups help satisfy the critical need for faculty, staff and students to know what is happening by way of improvements in their school. This technique also helps satisfy the inherent interest of the community for factual information about their schools and allows for wider input into school planning team deliberations. How does it work? Each SIP team member is asked to select three to five friends to form a pyramid group. Pyramid members are to be interviewed (in person or by phone) following each meeting of the team. The interviewer accomplishes two tasks: (1) present new information to peer group members to keep them informed about the planning process and (2) ask for opinions or reactions or judgments of peer group members for sharing in the next planning session.

The benefits of "pyramiding" have included informing the school community about school improvement planning and preparing the climate for change. It has also served as a rich source of needed data for decisions the SIP team makes and it has also influenced people to become positive and to make contributions, rather than to become destructive of school programs.

12. Data-based decision making must be required and enabled.

Our experience with data collection in the shared decision making project has perhaps raised as many frustrations as it has provided answers. We are a relatively small district without access to in-house specialists in the areas of research and investigation. Consequently, use of "critical friends" has proven to be invaluable. In our case, Peter Holly, the Department of Educational Administration at Iowa State

University, The Iowa State Education Association, and an independent consultant provided by NEA, and the networking with other participants in the Learning Lab Initiative have been instrumental in getting us to use data for making better decisions. We believe that the data being collected is rich in information about our district. We are, however, still learning how to ask the right questions, glean information from the answers, and transform what we learn into a fruitful plan of action to improve learning.

The data collection procedures for the Marshalltown SDM project have been greatly influenced by Peter Holly's work in action research. A 52 item survey was developed by an assessment task force from the SDM Team, and has been administered in the spring of 1991 and 1992 to all staff members. The purposes of the district level assessment, as determined by the SDM Team are: to assess the implementation of SDM district-wide; to use information in the district to provide feedback to building teams; to collect base line data for purposes of measuring progress toward goals at a future point in time. Returns from the 1992 survey were 86% of total staff. Survey results are reported for the district as a whole to stakeholders, including staff, Board of Education, and parents.

Results are also disaggregated by building. An early issue for the assessment task force to overcome was tension and anxiety from the buildings that information identified as coming from their buildings would be "used against them" by the district. This was clearly a trust issue. It was resolved by channeling the survey forms through a neutral intermediary who recoded them according to building before being sent for scanning. After the first results came back and the skeptics realized that their fears were not realized, that particular issue died. Each building receives its results to use as its SIP team deems appropriate. Building results are not made available to the SDM team or to the school district itself unless the individual building chooses to do so.

During the first year of SDM at the building levels, an interview survey was developed and administered by Danforth project graduate students from Iowa State University (Danforth Project, 1991). The purpose of the interviews was to follow up and to validate the paper-pencil survey results. Ninety-eight (98) randomly selected staff members were interviewed. The interviewers presented their written results and conclusions to the SDM Team. No decision has been made by the SDM Team about the frequency of follow-up interview surveys.

A third source of data available to the district is from the Rapporteur Reports. A Rapporteur team of six people visited the district for three days in May, 1991. During that time they interviewed a variety of stakeholders. A report-out was conducted with the Board of Education and the SDM Team, and a written report of observations followed. These data were valuable to the district because they provided an outside view and validated earlier conclusions from the district's own written survey and interviews. The Rapporteur Report provided "nudges" for the district to consider. These nudges served to stimulate discussion and establish goals for the SDM Team. A follow-up visit by a representative of the Rapporteur Team was conducted in the spring of 1992. That report focused upon noticeable changes in the district since the previous visit.

One of the "nudges" listed in the Rapporteur Report of 1991 was a concern for the slow pace of change that was expressed by some of the people who were interviewed. The feeling was that the SDM Team had spent a long time developing the process at the district and building levels, and that some people were becoming impatient to launch into substantive issues. "You have successfully held this process/substance issue in a creative tension, but you must be sure it does not become a disruptive tension. We strongly nudge you to begin applying your process skills and structures to substantive changes and decision making in the schools." As a result, the district brought Peter Holly in to train facilitators,

teachers, and interested parents in his action research techniques. Holly's ideas were widely accepted by participants and have directly influenced data collection procedures at the building design team levels. That effort paid off for the district. In the 1992 staff survey, 52% of teachers and 74% of administrators agreed that gathering information from stakeholders is a part of their building's plan for improvement, compared to 38% of staff and 44% of administrators who responded the same way a year earlier. Just 7% of teachers and 4% of administrators disagree, while 40% of teachers and 22% of administrators indicated they didn't know whether gathering information was a part of their building's school improvement plan or felt that the issue didn't apply to them. The June, 1992, Rapporteur Follow-up Report stated: "I would like to add a praise to the original list: attention to documentation and evaluation. I heard considerable talk about commitment to action research, data collection and use, and formative assessment and planning. Particular examples include: conducting the survey for the second year and expanding the pool of respondents; Peter Holly workshops; and discussion at the June Vertical Team meeting of when and how to assess building-level and district-level progress."

The district had implemented its own version of action research prior to the Shared Decision Making for School Improvement Project. Through its Career Ladder Program, many teachers developed Action Plans, in which they cooperatively established an instructional skills improvement program with their building principal, developed a written plan of action that included gathering data about the success of their project, implementing the project, and evaluating their success. Many of these action plans entailed gathering of data using action research techniques. Action plans are required to tie in with building and/or district goals. The action plan format is still widely used by teachers and have served to stimulate individual research and growth.

13. Efforts to learn and improve must be total, dynamic, and generative.

As a district we have only begun to understand this principle. We have seen new members come to our district SDM Team, as well as to building SIP teams and they are not aware of our culture regarding the use of trust, group processing skills, and consensus as a way to make decisions. The project has developed a basic problem-solving model for school improvement built on the principle of inclusiveness. Stakeholders who want to be involved in the improvement of teaching and learning volunteer to participate on a building planning or design team. All team members are not at the same stage in their learning and it is now recognized we need to be doing things to help those members.

As teams we have learned that Peter Holly's "action research" concept is really a process that enables teams to be total, dynamic and generative. He has taught us that the elements of the system are connected, that the focus for change is the school, and that the process is never ending. To be successful we must identify what we need, plan how to meet the need, and measure our progress toward closing the gap between what we have and what we want. We must understand and use our data as an important part of the stakeholder's information to be processed in developing a consensus decision.

We have learned that our process does not work well when stakeholders are not included in the data collection and analysis process. They lack trust in the outcome, they are not accepting of the interpretation of the data, or the responsibility to make use of the data. Ownership of the gap created by the data increases among stakeholders when they make decisions about its importance to them in understanding the problem and possible solutions to the problem. Communication among the stakeholders seems to make our model effective.

Survey results indicate about 53% of the teachers and about 74% of the administrators agree with the statement "Gathering information from stakeholders is part of my building's plan for improvement."

Also 70% of the teachers agree, "I use action research to improve teaching and learning in my classroom." And about 78% of the teachers and administrators agree the "District provides opportunities to learn and grow professionally."

These are the steps of our problem solving model. We believe acceptance and trust among all participants is the essential first step in working together successfully for school improvement. The second step includes students, parents, teachers, administrators, and others identifying a vision for the future and using needs assessment data. The third step in the process is building a solid information base of research that is critical to the understanding of the problems or barriers which might keep us from accomplishing the vision. The fourth step is to continuously evaluate action(s) and make adjustments as necessary, and report that to the team, and others for consideration and support.

We are on the journey toward being generative in our efforts to learn and improve. The process used by the district SDM Team and building SIP teams to improve teaching and learning is not a total one. We anticipate that it will become a total effort. The decision by teams to make systemic changes in our schools is a dynamic action. How well we do in supporting schools in their change efforts, will in large part, be a reflection of how well we learn to use this principle.

References

Danforth Project. (1991). Twenty three research questions about SDM. Individual interviews with stratified sample of 104 Marshalltown staff members from all job categories. Ames, IA: Iowa State University.

Dolan, W.P. (1989). The pyramid organization. Unpublished paper. Overland Park, KS: W.P. Dolan & Associates.

Doyle, Richard & Tetzloff, Philip. (1992). Waivers Provide Relief, Allow Improvements. In The School Administrator. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.

Holly, Peter, & Southworth, Geoff. (1989). The developing school. London: The Falmar Press.

Institute for Development of Educational Activities, Inc. (1990). /I/D/E/A/ school improvement program. Workshop I. Training provided in Marshalltown, Iowa.

Institute for Development of Educational Activities, Inc. (1991). /I/D/E/A/ school improvement program. Workshop II. Training provided in Marshalltown, Iowa.

Iowa Leadership in Educational Administration Development (I-LEAD) in cooperation with American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and the Institute for Development of Educational Activities, Inc. (/I/D/E/A/). (1989). Instructional leadership team program. Training provided in Des Moines, IA.

Learning lab initiative - shared decision making. (1990). A booklet containing purposes, beliefs, goals, rationale, responsibilities, process, etc., relating to the district shared decision making/school improvement process. Marshalltown, IA: Marshalltown Community School District.

Marshalltown SDM/SIP survey. (1991). Survey results for selected factors of restructuring, empowerment, involvement, collegiality, collaboration, teaching and learning. Marshalltown, IA: Marshalltown Community School District.

Marshalltown SDM/SIP survey. (1992). Survey results for selected factors of restructuring, empowerment, involvement, collegiality, collaboration, teaching and learning. Marshalltown, IA: Marshalltown Community School District.

National Center for Innovation. (1991). Marshalltown rapporteur report. Washington, DC: National Education Association.

National Center for Innovation. (1992). Marshalltown first year rapporteur follow-up report. Washington, DC: National Education Association.

Reflections. (1989-1993). Individual participant feedback from monthly district SDM meetings. Marshalltown, IA: Marshalltown Community School District.

Renze, Thomas J. (1991). An analysis of perceptions of shared decision making in early stages of implementation as related to selected factors associated with school improvement. Ph.D. dissertation. Ames, IA: Iowa State University.